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# BILLY CREEK RANCH
## LOWER SALMON RIVER

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
### IDAHO STATE OFFICE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

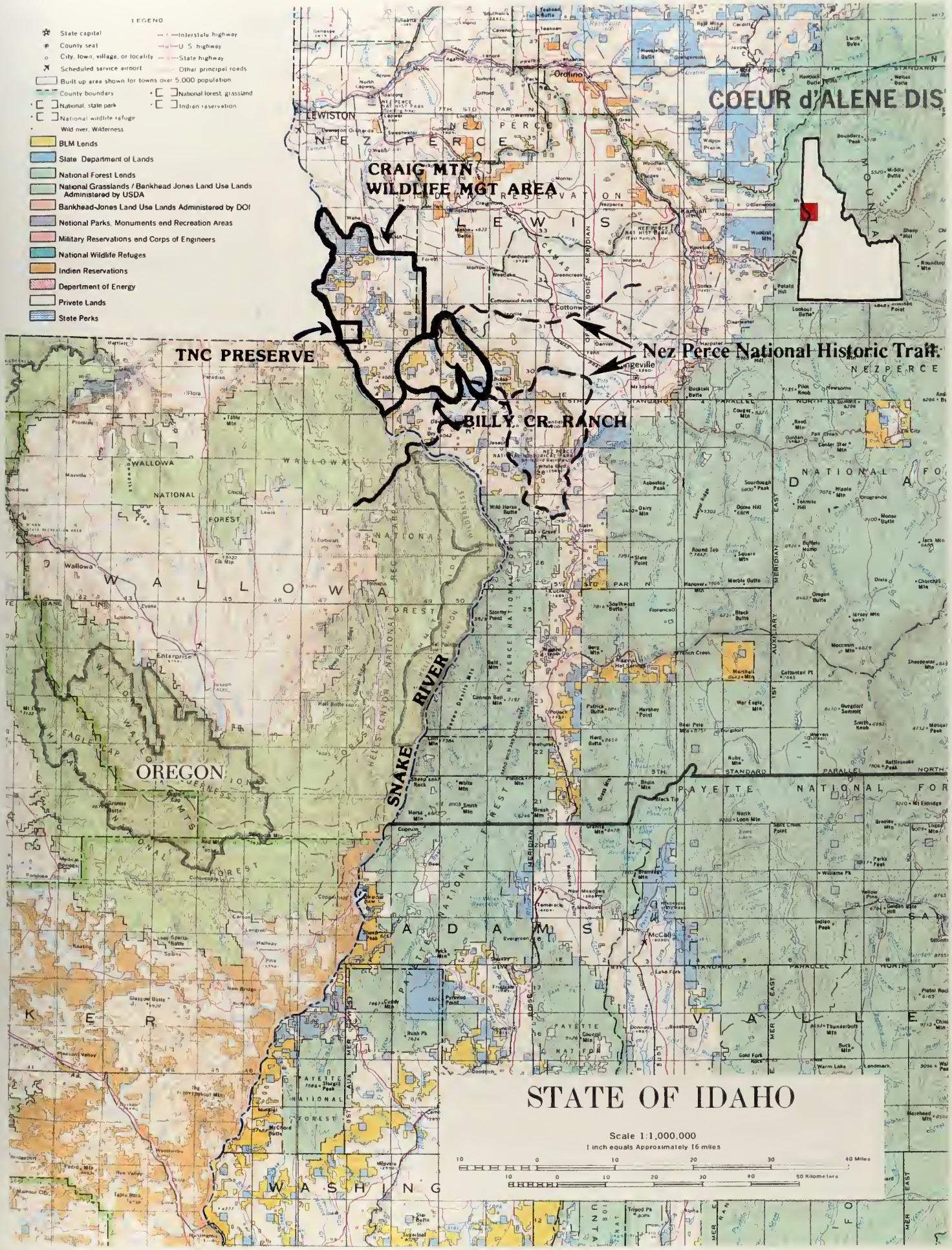
**BILLY CREEK RANCH**

The Billy Creek Ranch extends along the south side of the Lower Salmon River for 20 miles, with seven miles of actual river frontage. The ranch varies nearly 4,000 feet in elevation from the river to the top of Joseph Plains. Acquisition of this 19,663 acre ranch will tie together BLM and state lands to create a 35,000 acre manageable block of public land.

The ranch contains a tremendous quantity and diversity of resources. Many of these resource values will be in jeopardy or irretrievably lost if the ranch is subdivided and developed. Because of its location and character, the Billy Creek Ranch riverfront is highly desirable for development. A new hunting and fishing lodge (commercial outfitter business) that was built this year on less desirable property directly across the Salmon River has already marred the Lower Salmon River viewshed.

Some of the outstanding features of the Billy Creek Ranch include:

- Threatened and Endangered Species:
  Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon
  Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon
  Snake River Sockeye Salmon
  Bald Eagle
  Multiple candidate and sensitive species of both plants and animals
- Nez Perce National Historic Trail
- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Pending Legislation for Wild and Scenic River Designation
- Outstanding Recreation Values (hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, whitewater boating)
- Critical Year-Round Big Game Habitat (Bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, white tail deer, black bear, and cougar)
- Within confines of Lower Salmon River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)


LEGEND
State capital
County seat
City, town, village, or locality
Scheduled service airport
Built up area shown for towns over 5,000 population
County boundary
National, state park
National wildlife refuge
Wild river, Wilderness
Interstate highway
U. S. highway
State highway
Other principal roads
National forest, grassland
Indian reservation
BLM Lands
State Department of Lands
National Forest Lands
National Grasslands / Bankhead Jones Land Use Lands Administered by USDA
Bankhead-Jones Land Use Lands Administered by DOI
National Parks, Monuments and Recreation Areas
Military Reservations and Corps of Engineers
National Wildlife Refuges
Indian Reservations
Department of Energy
Private Lands
State Perks
COEUR d'ALENE DIS
CRAIG MTN.
WILDLIFE MGT AREA
TNC PRESERVE
Nez Perce National Historic Trail.
BILLY CR. RANCH
SNAKE RIVER
OREGON
STATE OF IDAHO
Scale 1:1,000,000
1 inch equals Approximately 16 miles

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BILLY CREEK RANCH

## PROJECT NAME

Billy Creek Ranch

## STATE, COUNTY

Idaho, Idaho

## BLM DISTRICT

Coeur d'Alene Distict Office

Fritz Rennebaum, District Manager

1803 North Third Street

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

FTS/COM (208) 769-5000

## BLM RESOURCE AREA

Cottonwood Resource Area

Lanny O. Wilson, Area Manager

Route 3, Box 181

Cottonwood, Idaho 83522

FTS/COM (208) 962-3245

## CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

District One, Honorable Larry LaRocco (D)

## LOCATION

Lower Salmon River

## CURRENT OWNERSHIP

Shroyer Ranches, Inc.

24799 Grange Hall Road

Philomath, OR 97370

(503) 929-2694

## LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Township 30 & 31 North, Range 2 & 3 West, B.M.

## ACRES

19,622.84 deeded, 15,760 leased

## ESTIMATED VALUE

$4-5,000,000

# BACKGROUND

**BILLY CREEK RANCH**

The BLM in Idaho has an ongoing program to trade isolated tracts of public land for private lands that offer public benefits and help consolidate public land into larger units. In addition to this program, the Coeur d'Alene District is working on the Lower Salmon River Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Project. There is only limited funding remaining for this project. Additional funding has been requested in the FY 1995 strategic budget plan.

The goal of the Lower Salmon River LWCF project is to protect the outstanding, undeveloped, scenic qualities and other significant resource values within the river corridor through acquisition of fee title or conservation (scenic) easements on the private lands along the river corridor.

The Billy Creek Ranch is the most critical acquisition for BLM along the entire Lower Salmon River. Attempts over the last several years to negotiate a land exchange between the owner and BLM have been unsuccessful; however, a combination of alternatives, such as exchange and purchase or phased acquisition may be possible. Although the property is not currently being marketed, we believe the absentee landowner does not intend to retain the property over the long term. The owner has not rejected preliminary inquiries regarding the property. Acquisition has not been aggressively pursued since BLM does not currently have the funds available to purchase the ranch.

# RESOURCE VALUES

BILLY CREEK RANCH

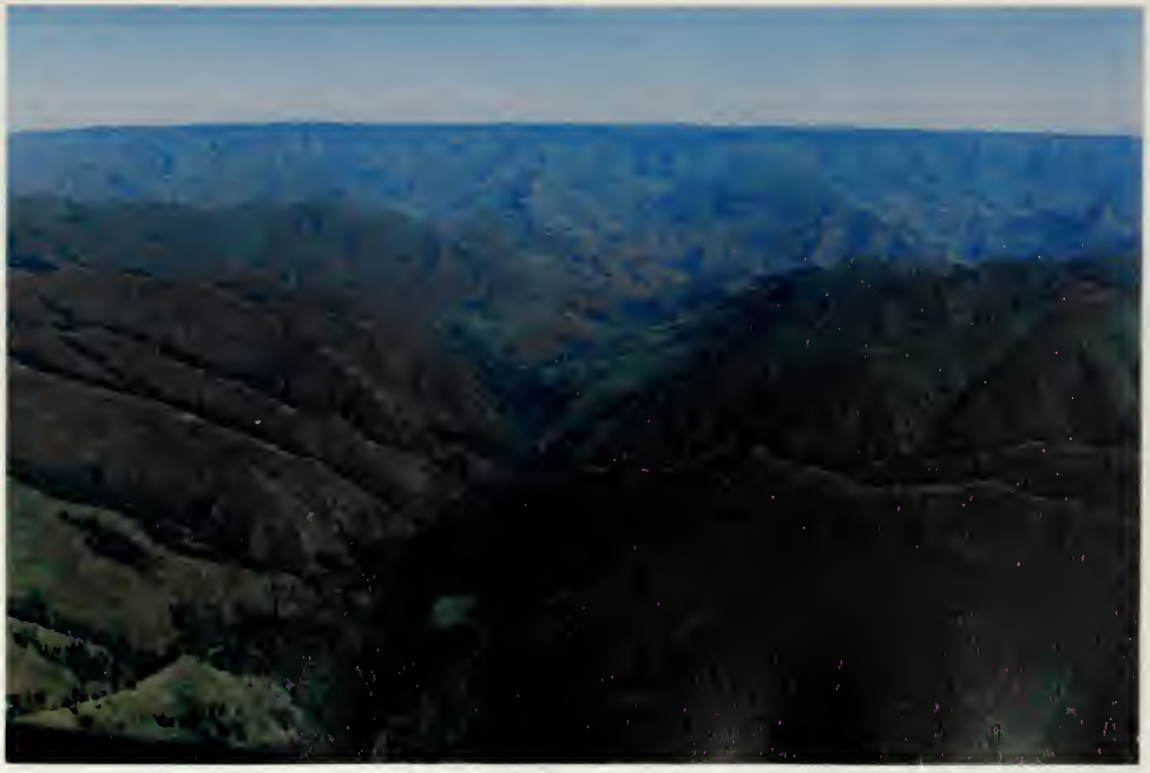
The ranch varies in elevation from 1,000 feet above sea level along the Salmon River to nearly 5,000 feet on top of Joseph Plains. The Lower Salmon River flows through a deep, semi-arid canyon of rugged beauty interspersed with high rolling grasslands giving way to timber at the higher elevations. The largely undeveloped ranch possesses outstanding scenic qualities.

The Lower Salmon River and adjoining Joseph Plains remain relatively undeveloped. The area contains unique and highly significant scenic, recreational, cultural, wildlife, riparian and fisheries values. There have been numerous studies and analyses of the Lower Salmon River Canyon area that have led to measures intended to preserve the existing qualities of the river canyon and its surroundings. Congressional intent and the extensive record of public comment support present efforts toward protecting the existing qualities found in the area; however, there is growing interest in the speculative marketing of recreational properties and exploitation of the natural values of the canyon.

The Billy Creek Ranch is the single largest parcel of non-federal land along this scenic river corridor. The property has high potential for subdivision and development due to the large flats and benches along the river, which are ideal building sites. In addition, the road down Billy Creek to the river is one of only two roads to the south bank of the river along the lower 53 miles of the Salmon River. The shoreline along the Lower Salmon River is currently about 85% publicly owned. The acquisition of the Billy Creek Ranch would increase public ownership to more than 90%.

**BILLY CREEK RANCH**

◀ *Bighorn Sheep in Lower Salmon Canyon. It is an objective of BLM and Idaho Fish & Game to re-introduce Bighorn Sheep into the unoccupied habitat on the Billy Creek Ranch.*



▶ *General Canyon scenery. View is down Cottonwood Creek on Shroyer Ranch north toward Salmon River.*

## VEGETATION

The vegetation varies from open grassy slopes along the river to heavy forests of pine and fir trees at the upper elevations. The plant communities on the ranch are similar to those found on The Nature Conservancy's China Garden preserve, about ten miles to the northwest. (See location map). Two plant species on the property are federal candidates for listing as threatened and endangered, and it is likely that other rare plant species are present.

## TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE

The Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area (CMWMA) borders the ranch on the opposite side of the Salmon River to the north and the west. (See location map). The CMWMA consists of approximately 120,000 acres of BLM and Idaho Department of Fish and Game land and is jointly managed by these agencies. The Conservation Fund, working in cooperation with Bonneville Power Administration, Idaho Fish and Game, and BLM, recently acquired 62,000 acres of this wildlife unit. The Billy Creek Ranch, like the CMWMA, supports large populations of elk, deer, turkey, chukar partridge, grouse, cougar, black bear, and a large expanse of unoccupied Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep habitat. The ranch has suitable habitat for Peregrine falcons, an endangered species. Wintering bald eagles, an endangered species, and candidate species, including mountain/quail, and as many as six species of land snails occur on the ranch, along with several BLM sensitive species.

## AQUATIC WILDLIFE

Cottonwood Creek flows through the property and supports redband and wild steelhead trout, both BLM sensitive species. The creek also provides critical rearing habitat for spring/summer chinook salmon, a federally listed threatened species. There are approximately 35 miles of perennial streams and riparian areas on the ranch in addition to almost seven miles of Salmon River frontage. The Salmon River is also designated as critical habitat for chinook and for Snake River sockeye salmon, an endangered species.

BILLY CREEK RANCH

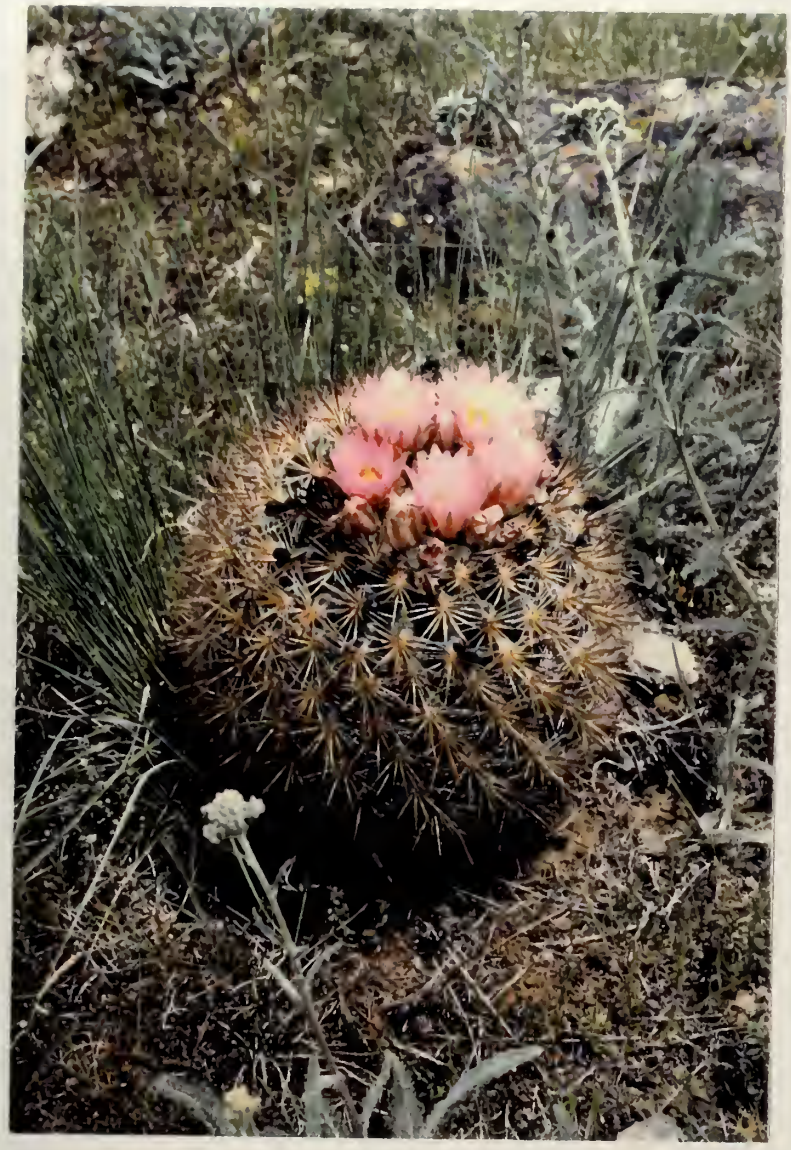
## RECREATION

In 1968, Congress recognized the national value of the Salmon River by designating the 237-mile stretch from North Fork, Idaho, to its confluence with the Snake River as a Study River under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Legislation has been drafted and will be introduced this session to designate this reach of river as a scenic river component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

The Lower Salmon River is experiencing tremendous increases in public recreation use, primarily from white water boating and steelhead trout fishing. However, general recreation pursuits including hunting, camping, and other related activities have also increased at an annual rate of approximately 20% during the past several years.

Although there are more than 8,000 acres of BLM land scattered throughout the ranch, there is presently no legal public access to these public lands. The Billy Creek Ranch has good road access to the river and almost seven miles of river frontage with the highest recreational homesite development potential of any property on the Lower Salmon River.

**BILLY CREEK RANCH**



◀ *Pediocactus simpsonii var robustior (Simpson's hedgehog cactus) BLM listed sensitive species. Grows on rocky ridgetops, basalt outcrops in canyon grasslands. Potential habitat on/near property under consideration.*

*Typical vegetation. Open grassy slopes mixed with heavy forest of pine and fir trees.* ▼

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

BILLY CREEK RANCH

The Salmon River canyon country has long been the focus of human attention. The cultural resources within and adjoining the Billy Creek Ranch, including Joseph Plains and the Lower Salmon River, represent 10,000 years of human activity.

This long history of use created a diversity of cultural sites that include rock structures, pictographs, prehistoric housepits, stone artifacts, mines, mining equipment, cans, bottles, glass, ceramics, nails, shovels, picks, ditches, reservoirs, trails and graves. These cultural resources are the evidence of prehistoric and historic cultures, and in some cases, are the only remaining examples of certain types of sites in the Pacific Northwest. Along the Lower Salmon River, approximately 200 prehistoric and historic sites have been inventoried and recorded. Unique upland prehistoric sites have also been documented on federal land inholdings within the ranch. Because of the importance of these resources, the Lower Salmon River Archeological District, which includes portions of the Billy Creek Ranch, has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Nez Perce (Nee-me-poo) National Historic Trail crosses the middle of the ranch. During the Nez Perce War of 1877, the Nez Perce Indian Tribe evaded the pursuing cavalry by traveling across Joseph Plains through the ranch property and then down Billy Creek to the Salmon River where they made an historic crossing during flood stage. (See location map). The Billy Creek Ranch contains many sites that were used by the Nez Perce Indians and their ancestors, as well as early Chinese miners and white settlers.

Ferries also formed an important link for the transportation of both people and livestock across the forbidding Salmon River. One of the few reliable ferry crossings on the Lower Salmon was located at Billy Creek.

# SUPPORT, ECONOMICS, AND PUBLIC OPINION



The public overwhelmingly supports such an acquisition in this area. Hunters and fishermen have longed to have access to this ranch for many years but only a select few have been allowed to enjoy it. The 44 outfitter and guide businesses that rely on the Lower Salmon River for their existence and the private boating public are on record with unqualified support of acquisitions such as this to preserve the natural, unspoiled scenic qualities of the Lower Salmon River. Other entities who have indicated their support include, but are not limited to, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Idaho Conservation League, The Nature Conservancy, and the Idaho Rivers Unlimited.

The Idaho County Commissioners are on record as being opposed to any increases in federal acreage within the county because of the negative impact to the county tax base. Idaho County, because of its large federal land base (4.5 million acres) and its small population (14,000 people), receives the maximum payment in lieu of taxes that is allowed by law. Additional federal land ownership would not cause an increase in payments to the county. County taxes for the Billy Creek Ranch in 1992 totaled approximately $5,970. Idaho County's tax revenues would be reduced by this amount if BLM acquired the ranch through purchase or donation.

The negative economic impacts to the county would be offset to some extent by increased tourism to the county. The tax loss impact could be reduced in other ways such as by selling or exchanging public land within Idaho County for a portion of the purchase price of the ranch or by planning future land exchanges to benefit the tax base of Idaho County.

The Conservation Fund may be willing to offset the tax revenue loss to the county, as it did on its recent 62,000-acre Craig Mountain acquisition.

# MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

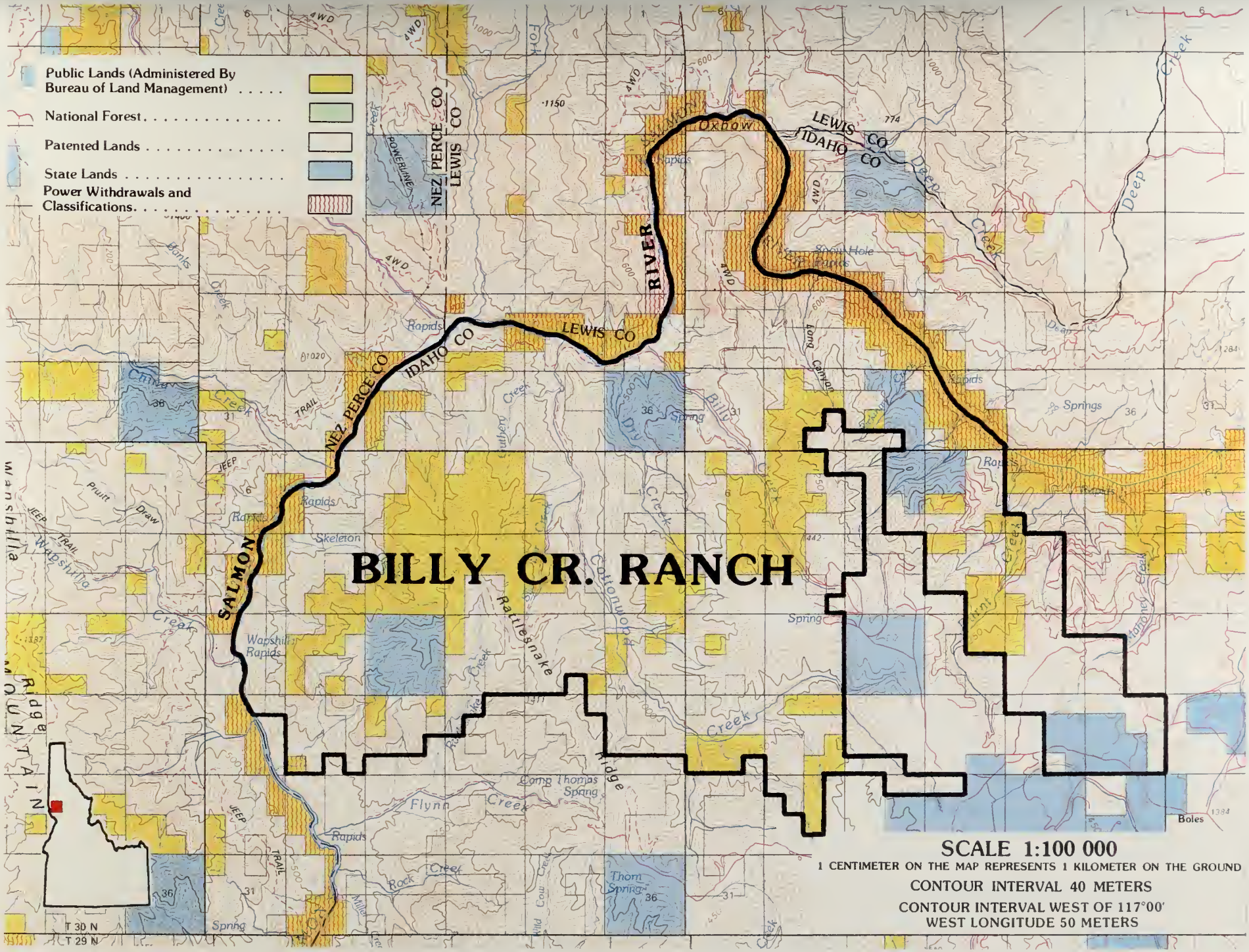


Bureau of Land Management would manage the property to preserve its present undeveloped state. Upon acquisition, public access to the area's outstanding recreation opportunities would be available for vehicular travel. The ranch would be cooperatively managed by BLM and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. There are currently two Habitat Management Plans and Sikes Act Agreements between the BLM and Idaho Department of Fish and Game which provide for the cooperative management of both the aquatic and terrestrial species habitat on the public lands within the boundaries of the ranch. Management priorities would include fishery and wildlife habitat improvement, especially for threatened and endangered species. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep would also be reintroduced.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has contributed funds to BLM in the past for rehabilitation of critical elk winter range on public lands located within the ranch boundaries and would surely take an active role in future management actions on the overall property.

Cultural and historical resource inventories would provide the basis for public information and interpretive opportunities.

# APPENDIX


Public Lands (Administered By Bureau of Land Management)
National Forest
Patented Lands
State Lands
Power Withdrawals and Classifications
BILLY CR. RANCH
SALMON RIVER
NEZ PERCE CO
LEWIS CO
IDAHO CO
Oxbow
Deep Creek
Rattlesnake Ridge
Cottonwood Creek
Flynn Creek
Camp Thomas Spring
Thorn Spring
Wapshilla Rapids
Skeleton
Rapids
Springs
Spring
Boles
T 30 N
T 29 N
SCALE 1:100 000
1 CENTIMETER ON THE MAP REPRESENTS 1 KILOMETER ON THE GROUND
CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 METERS
CONTOUR INTERVAL WEST OF 117°00'
WEST LONGITUDE 50 METERS

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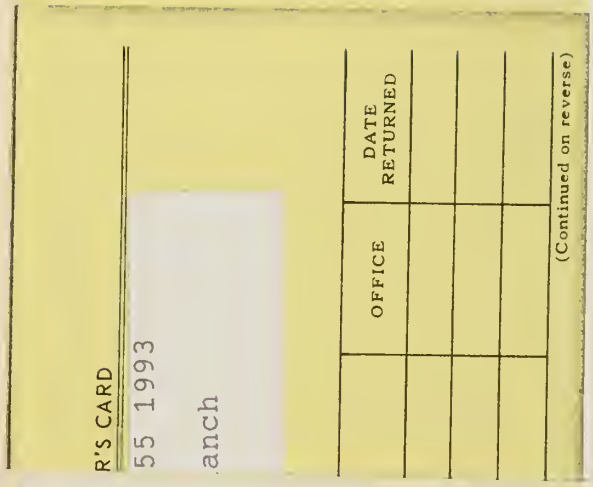


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